

or carrying through any definite plan of retrenchment and reform. One obvious remedy that should have been applied was peace. Yet the war, with its annual burden of heavy taxes, was allowed to continue. Neither did the Commons distinguish themselves by any memorable action, such as that of the Good Parliament. All that they did was to keep up a running comment of complaint against everything that happened, like the chorus in a Greek play. There is little that is heroic or admirable to record in these four years. Yet they cannot be passed over in silence by the historian who demonstrates the sequence of events in Richard's reign, for they are marked by the transformation of one set of political parties and problems into another.

Hitherto the contests for power have raged round the central figure of John of Gaunt, while the King has taken little part in the government of his realm. After the Peasants' Rising both these conditions were altered. The power of the Duke, declining ever since his nephew's accession, had received a fatal blow from the demonstrations of popular feeling made against him throughout the country. The one thing more that was needed to drive him from politics was the determined hostility of the Crown. This was now forthcoming. Richard formed a royal party, and put the management of affairs into the hands of his friends. With the King's newly acquired power grew his hatred for John of Gaunt, and for all others who wished to keep him in the tutelage of coun[^] cillors whom he had not chosen. He did not yet govern by himself, but he governed through Michael de la Pole and the Veres. The bulk of the nobility found themselves excluded from power by a small clique of their own order. The Commons found that the administration was no better under the new regime than it had been before, and that the King's favourites were even less accountable to Parliament than the ministers at the beginning of his reign. When the year 1385 drew to a close, the King and a small group of his nobles were standing opposed to the peerage and the nation. But John of Gaunt was no longer in a position to lead the attack on his nephew. In the spring of 1386 he withdrew from English politics and crossed the sea to capture